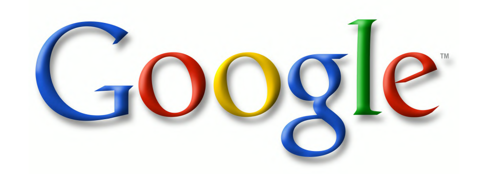
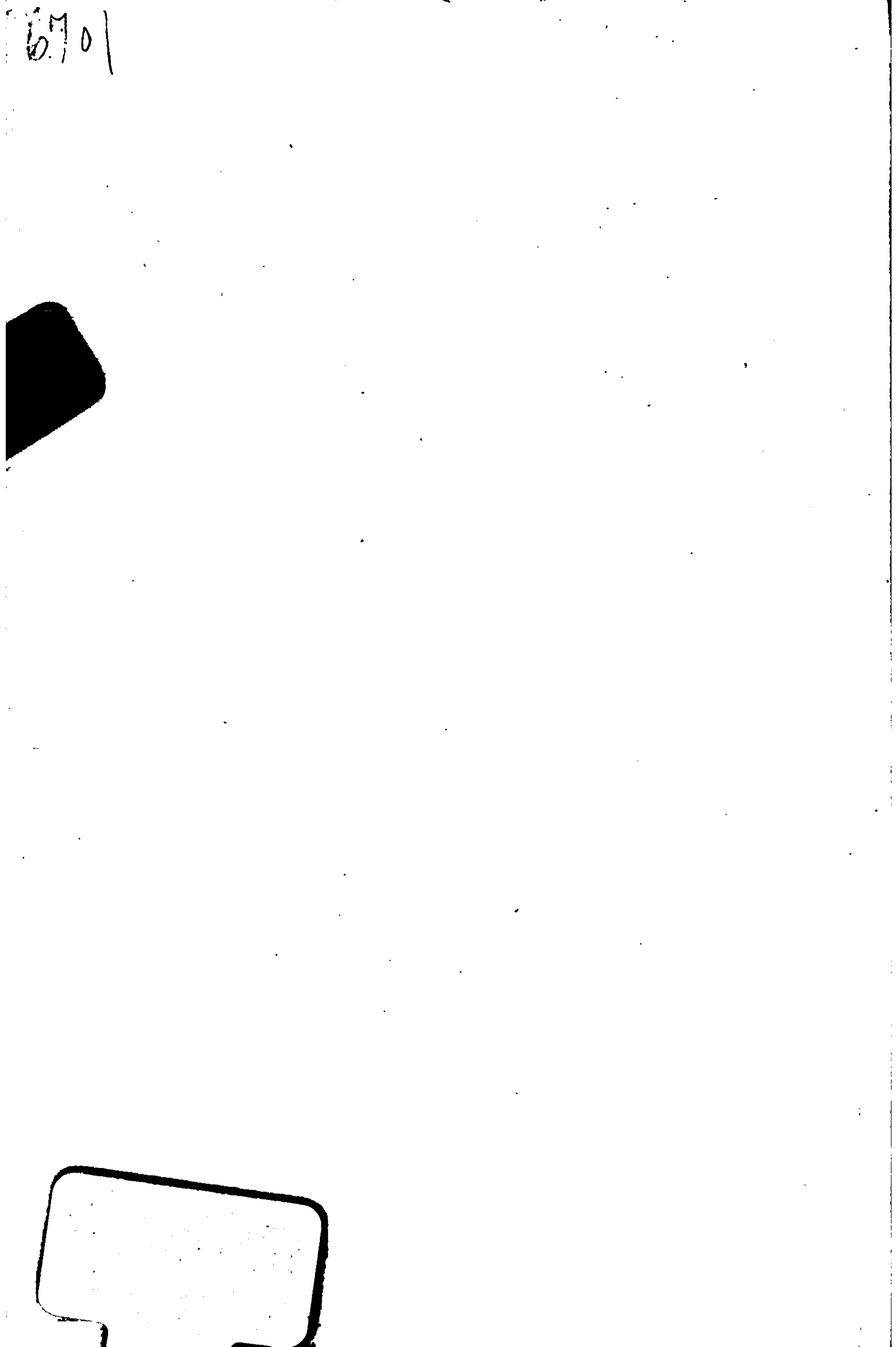




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THE SPIRIT PROSPERO

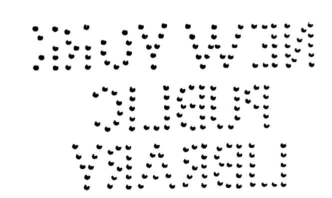
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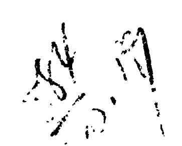
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FREDERICK BROOKS LINDSEY



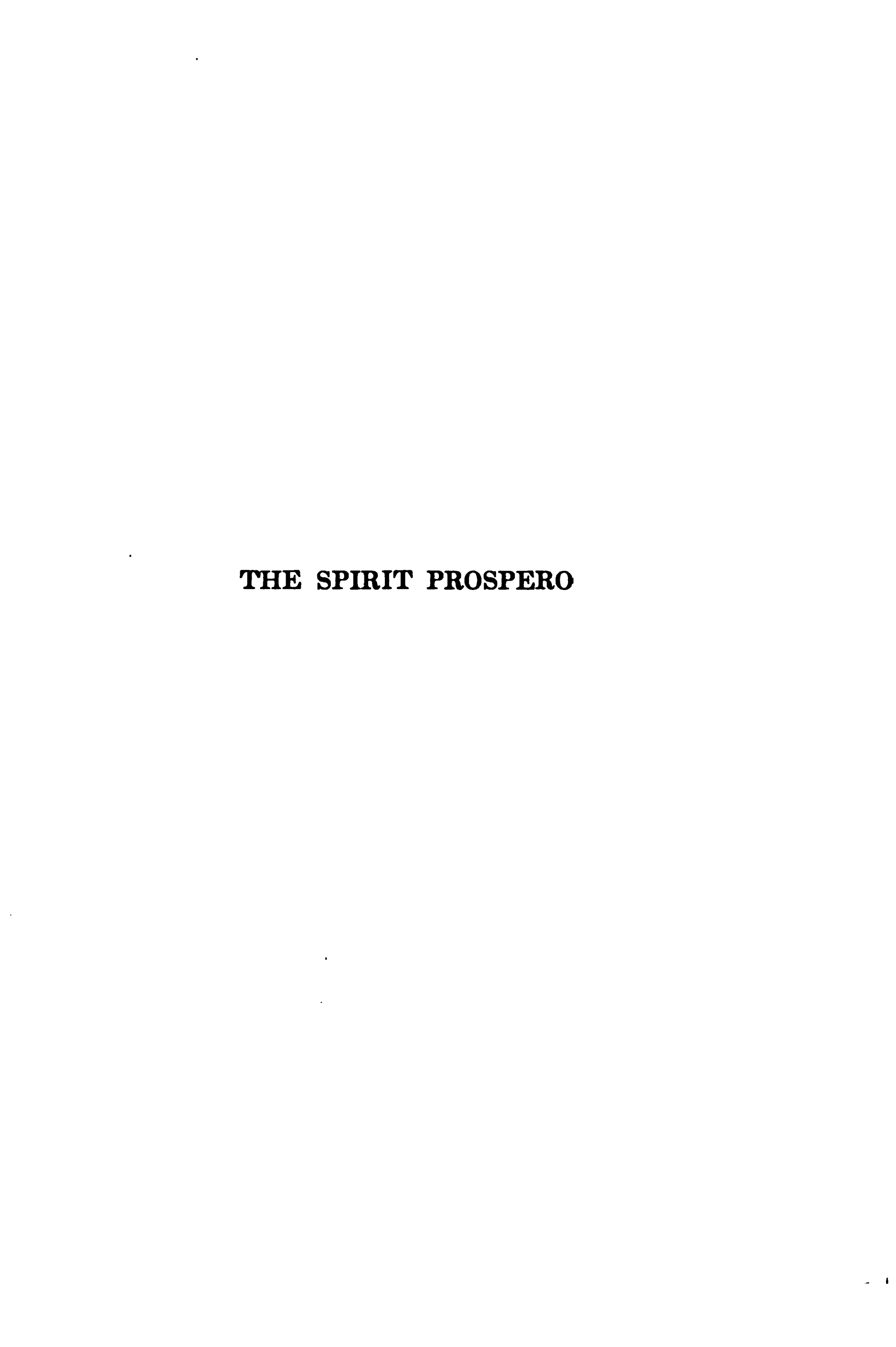
BOSTON
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THE SPIRIT PROSPERO

THE SPIRIT PROSPERO

A SPENSERIAN VERSE CYCLE

SPIRIT of Dream, ye have oft guided me
Into the secret place of loveliness,
Into the place of silences, where be
Ecstatic sights and sounds, the dear impress
Of nature on the mind, life's sterner stress,
And wrestling with Earth-meanings angel-thewed,
Thought, not to be denied until they bless.
With charmèd wand of sympathy endued,
Come, thou Prospero of the spirit, and o'er me brood.

Come thou, and let all lovely things be mine:
All contemplative creature-haunts, all lairs
Of beasts, cradles of fledgelings woven fine
Of threads and grasses, all soft mottled vairs;
Let me hear carollings, and all fresh airs
Tonal in Nature's chantries; let me know morns
Of singing, insect-canticles, affairs
Of wonder, where the sea-deep, laughing, adorns
Herself, or sends cave-voices wailing like dread Norns.

Wherever shadows on the wooded hills
  Wheel where the flying clouds have shortly
      been;
Wherever wooingly the sun instils
  Beauty into the woods most secret linn,
  Long afternoons steeping it utterly in
Shadowy drowse; wherever on the face
  Of moving waters, foam-flecks and mist-
      veils thin,
White breakers gleam, smit with a sudden
      grace,—
There hast thou taught me each wild loveliness
      to trace.

From the green horn-book of the forest trees,
  Where ancient silences mysterious brood,
I still with thee my earliest A. B. C's
  Have conned, watching where virgin beeches
      stood
  Braiding them day by day a leafier snood;
Or hearkening the faint cattle-bells that broke
  The quiet of the wood-paths; or where cooed
The lonesome cushat-dove; till midday woke
The little, choiring, multitudinous forest-folk.

And thou hast taught me to give ear at dawn
To the first breathings of a summer day,
To that dead hush before the dark is gone;
To faint bird-cries, so faint they hardly stray
In at the window; then find at last a way.
Suddenly two clear voices wing and wing
Lift brotherly. The dark wells into gray;
A cool air moves the tree-boughs. Sing, oh, sing,
Ye myriad little throats, mad with your jargoning!

And I have learned through thy so kindly eyes,
Kindly to look on humble things of the field
And wayside: bind-weed that an outcast lies;
The knot-grass fettering, and the nettled shield
Of the gray meadow-thistle, compelled to yield
Its toothsome top at last to boyhood's rude
Assault; blind-worm in the earth-mold half concealed;
The field-fare; and in happy mother mood,
The wren, twittering to her little fledgeling brood.

I know a palm by a lone island-head
And lone sea-grasses waving, and in the sand,
As ancient embers quickened, a single red,
Nakedly flaming poppy. Ah, me! thy hand
In my hand, again I wander that indolent strand,
All the slow-moving, tropical afternoon,
By somnolent airs and odors languorous fanned,
Recreant to civilized ways and days too soon,
And dowered by a mad Sea-love's too, ah, too tragical boon!

In those strange ways where lonely sailor-folk,
By wild sea-woes too credulously led,
Walk, I have walked, too; sad only when was broke
The spell that thy voice cast: unvisited
Seas, where the solitude was a spirit wed
To creatures as unsociable, yet not unkind!
Alone, alone with the unhouseled dead
I have sought Heaven's pity, rich at last to find
The blessed tie that creature doth with creature bind!

Ofttimes with thee, in dreaming fancy vied,
I have lived in that green Underworld of the sea,
Cavernous, where fishes monstrous-eyed
Or eyeless, abort, almost uncreatured be
In their so fathomless silence. Incessantly
Above, with the moving waters to the shore,
I have moved, in undisturbèd privacy,
Skilled to reiterate their deep-sea lore
In unimaginable sadness o'er and o'er.

Oh, as I write, quick Nature summoneth up
Myriads of shapes that strive for utterance,
Till the full mind, o'erbrimming as a cup,
Makes choice of these or these by a mere chance;
And yet each, hued by its own circumstance,
Hath molded me by an unfelt duress.
Dream-spirit, O plastic to the glad dance
Of nature's loveliest forms, grant me no less
Than this: still to be subject to thy high beauty's stress!

Sometimes with thee at the boon-loiterings
  Of cronies I have made one, and heard such
    droll
Adventurous mischance, such hare-brained
    things
  As often from the clutch of the catch-poll
  Saves madcap Irish lads; learned, too, to
    troll
Convivial catches brought from overseas,
  And taught with the raised, waxen can to
    roll
From off the tongue, with a round jovial ease
Such as blithe idlers learn in wayside vagran-
    cies.

I faltered under the tedium of a day;
  Under the dreary blank of an afternoon
I felt all bright things deaden down to gray.
  Sudden a thousand boyish throats in tune
  Swelled with an athlete's laud.—For such a
    boon
Who would not strive his uttermost? What
    prize
  Better than this canst thou show, late or
    soon?—
A thousand glistening eyes, wet were my eyes!
A thousand lifted faces, my face was toward
    the skies!

Happy the summertide in the greenwood!
To cut the pasty underneath the thorn
With the stout friar and thee; or with bold Hood
In shining Lincoln green, upon the horn
To give one blast; or in the dappled morn
With Little John across the glades to bear
The haunch of venison. So, ho, the witch's scorn
When her defeated trains make the rout stare!
And the mad merriment when all hands hunt the hare!

Again with thee, mixed in the blithesome rout,
Uphill, downdale, with laughter winding on,
I have forayed the country side. About,
About still went the stirrup-cup; anon
The fanfare bugled. Or in wild Caledon,
Have worn the braided token blood-imbrued,
Which weaving an ever-magic eidolon,
With the shrill Benshie's boding power endued,
Hath crowned with piteous cumber many a border-feud.

In the old world of simple balladry
I have often strayed with thee: with horrored eyes
Noting where, on the spectral gallows-tree,
The border-outlaw dangles, and counsellor-wise
The crows hold croaking converse as they rise
Over the moors; or on the barren wold
Tracing the brother's shed blood, the miseries
Of the sister's love, the curst exile; behold,
The enchanted Urgan! and the whole sad story is untold.

Lessoned by thee, the nook of goblin-fay
Nightly was mine. Mischievous I bestrid
The haunted ridge-pole, sagging to decay,
My hairy legs in uncouth jack-boots hid,
And as a witch her skinny nag, I rid
Till the cock-crow. Or in the revels light
Of the shy forest elves, such tricks we did,
Such mad pranks played on every country wight,
As only wood-glades know at noon of lunar light!

Often with thee, where water-nixies played,
I have seen the wheels of windmills flinging free
The dooms of fisher-girls. Or where no shade
The wreckt spar cast on the quiet dead, through the sea
Upward I have watched where the stars still shining be
In fixèd stance; or with the wreathèd shells
Have played, tripping the bright floors pensively,
Listening the marvels elfin-music tells,
Chimingly through the lucent caves, like faint-heard bells.

And often I have felt so wistfully—
How wistfully thou only mayst know well,—
The presence of that beauteous, mystic she
That breeds the mortal ache; or, as sailors tell,
That spectre-hag of the phantom pair that dwell
On lonely ocean-keels; or in the blue air
Of tranquil morn, one that doth weave a spell
Upon the heart, till it find Death so fair
That it would alway that benignant presence share!

On shoulder slung a jaunty kerchief-pack,
A love-note struck in passing from joy's string,
A moment at rest's hostel, and a snack,—
Ho, Youth with thee is boune for anything!
Time comes the soul would cease its gipsying
Abroad, and cleanse itself of travel-stains.
The temples whiten, and a thin wavering
Comes in the voice. Now the soul counts its gains,
And hails across wide fields the loaden spirit-wains.

Ah, well-a-day! Soon joyance turns to sorrow.
Each day afresh, dim shifting galaxies
Of pain thy skies of change discover. To-morrow
Who shall foretell with what new poignancies
Of ache remediless and thwart disease
Time's womb shall teem? The soul rings dying knells,
Draining Life's bitter flagon to the upsees.
The secret place of joy, where it upwells,
It hath forgot; and, too, its glad hope-canticles.

Strange when each sense as in a coma lies;
Eye, ear, and tongue in grave entrancement sleep,
Like images of death; with fawn-shy eyes,
Furtive, with thee forth venturing to peep,
List I a fellow's call. Her yearning deep
Across the void would answer covertly.
Sudden as streams that through new channels sweep,
Or unseen waftures o'er a hidden lea,
Lo, the twain kinsmen-souls hold sweet love-mercery!

Runnels of water; fields, daisy-prankt and fair,
Pulsing with summer-colts; the plump of rain
On dusty roadsteads; the odor of damp hair;
Young yeanling calves piffling along a lane,
Playfellows of the summer; or in the wane
Of the year, the smoke of bone-fires bickering
In the gardens,—these stir me not in vain;
Oh, not in vain, each trivial-seeming thing!
Instincts, dim deeps of being rise at their summoning.

Oh, not in vain with thee hours of idlesse,
Not vain the sweet dubieties of thought!
They rise, these alien memories, to bless
Our days. Like homing birds to the dove-cot,
They come winging from far; from faint, unsought
Brute shores of being, where sometime man dwelt
In caves and boughs while reason yet was not:
Light of our seeing, whereby may best be spelt
Her features who afar at our race-cradle knelt.

There be who think the world a sorry jest,
Knowledge the gropings of a lunatic
About a tangled labyrinth; at best,
Life but a dark, lit by the guttering wick
Of a tiny instinct-candle. Quick, oh, quick
And sharp to such self-nidering thou giv'st reproof:
Pole-sundered from weak imagings of the brain-sick,
From puncheoned floor to architravèd roof,
Science's goodly fabric rises proof on sturdy proof.

Often old wives with many a slow headshake
And inly-taken breath, pray heaven forefend
Our age its store of woes, not knowing each ache,
Like growing-pains of youth, is meant to lend
The soul enlargement. Ills, thou hast taught, portend
The old imperfect yielding, as it were,
To the new perfect; forgot the dim by-end
Of being once each served, a malingerer
In the St. Martin's summer of the spirit year!

This hast thou taught me, this: the soul is one,
One in an inner urgence not to spend
Its essence keen in thought or feeling alone.
Round it the world and other selves extend.
It must still *do,* knowing its social end,
Its far world end. Though unastonièd
It may in loneliest caves of self descend
Batlike, it must still, on wide wings dispread,
Through the far heavens be on its Father's business sped!

Knowing the end, thou say'st, the self is one.
  Born in its bondage, and forever knit
With other selves in widest unison,
  The soul its own inviolable bit
  Of selfhood hath, conscious alone of it.
Its overt acts—The bee's work is the hive's,
  Foisons of honey-sweet. Each piece must
      fit
In the mosiac vast where it survives—
Still mold the universe, the self, and other lives!

In service grows the soul articulate;
  Still at thy touch my gates of being unbar
Wide and more wide. The inner seeks its mate
  In the vast social outer. This insular
  Grows ever continented; and high devoir
The spirit pays to Love, in parleyings
  With the remotest lives; until from far,
With sacrificial pollen on its wings,
It bears home store of sweet from all flower-
      traffickings.

I see Man's life an endless figure-loom;
  I see the heddles as they sink and swell,
The slow weft-thread unwinding in the gloom;
  I see the batten swing the reed right well:
  But of the figure vast can little spell.
And then thou shewest my own dim life to me,
  A broken thread, how caught, I scarce can tell,
Among the myriads that have been and be
Knitting the textiled Pictures of Eternity.

I see Man's life a word upon the page
  Of the great book whereon God ever reads;
I see the sentence that we call this age,
  And the long chapter writ with all Earth's deeds.
  But where the Story starts, whither it leads,
I cannot guess. Thou bid'st me spell the Word,
  Whose meaning is the meaning of men's creeds;
The Sentence, too; but all how vague and blurred!
They must from the dim Chapter be with toil inferred.

Often and often, to rid me of the doubt
  That has so fouled the world's immortal hope
Immortally to read the riddle out
  Of the spiritual maze wherein we grope,
  As sea-wreckt men clutch at a salvage rope,
I have sought thee; unraveling each train
  Of reasoned wistfulness, up the long slope
That man has traveled, again and yet again
With paradoxes blind baffling the wearied brain.

To face at last the one great paradox,
  The secret of the eternal nature-good
That, as a cloud-like phantasy, still mocks
  And still eludes the search! As if one should
  Seek how some Alp-land's ranges ordered
      stood,
Baffled by height and sun and cloud,—so Him,
  The eternal all-enfolding Spirithood,
Still shrouded by his fleshly cherubim,
And shrouded, too, by his flaming holy ser-
      aphim!

Old orthodoxies vanish, fade and fall:
With aging-veinèd hands we strive to hold
The venerable dream-shapes back. We call
With thee across the gulphs. But waxen old,
World-beliefs perish even as a tale that's told.
With all their twilit penuries of thought,
We see them crescent still with morning's gold.
Unweeting of noonday, the hands that sought
To raise these sanctuaries are dust, with all they wrought.

Often in a high-visioned hour the soul,
Dreaming upon faith's èxtreme terminal,
With thee would think that hour its lordly goal
When it sees self and God identical.
In that high hour, the old material
And outworn moral law that once sufficed
Grows transfigured; and Love, the all-in-all,
Whereby the evil, by the good enticed,
Itself turns good, enthrones a spiritual Christ.

Some say the soul is music of the brain;
Break but the singing chords, the air is fled.
Is it known otherwhere, that yearning pain
To be as a god, to wrest from the dull dead
Palms of bright life? I harken thee: Sea-fed
Is each dim spirit-pool in the far hills,
By a divine vast largesse nourishèd.
The soul is not the music faint that thrills
The harp; it is the Harper who the music wills.

Some say the soul above the tallow-dip
Of life burns like a flashing vireo
Above the water-flags. The snuffers nip;
Settle the eldritch glooms. Where did it go,
That arrowy radiance? Then I hear thee, Lo!
There is a Life-Urge infinite like the sea,
Upwelling ever from unplumbed depths below;
Out of this pulsing vast of being, we
Come, only to sink again in its immensity!

Some say the soul drags a still-lessening chain.
  Science fast proves the world a mechanism,
To one wide law reducible. Vain, vain,
  Old dreams of Freedom! Order is not a
      schism,
  But the true faith. From this sheer-down
      abysm
Of chance-directed atom,—ah, willy-nill!—
  Is no escape? One thought thou flash'st, a
      chrism
Of light: law is the *how*, the *why* is will:
Shall not the Eternal walk unerrant pathways
      still?

Youth's impulses, like barn-yard swifts in flight,
  Hover at home, unventuring to stray far
Over thought's lintel. To my earliest sight
  The world lay like a field glittering with
      spar
  In fragments strewn; in gladness like a star
Each bush, each wave, each alder-thicket shone.
  But to my age, by thee illumed, unbar
Undreamed-of unities; and better known,
The world a simulacrum of the self is shown.

Oh, darkly is it shown, as in a glass!
  Darkly against the stern antinomies
Of reason, the plumèd wings of faith, alas,
  Beat, beat, and are broken! But by degrees,
  Maugre the kill-joy doubt, thou giv'st me ease
Within an ever-enlarging globe of day:
  Ever across Time's gulphs the high soul sees
The conscious purpose of one thought make way;
Ever one mighty Will ordering the world's disarray.

Perturbed with doubt and sorrows tenebrous,
  Forever baffled in its vaward hope,
Beyond the most ancient marking of Time's fosse,
  About the eternal ordure at last to grope,
  The mind, its fore-look still must have, thou show'st;
From human means with whatso care and cark,
  To lift the glory of Heaven's refulgent cope;
Vast shadow-shapes to project on the dark,
The Infinite Round to cast from the littleness of earth's arc.

Projecting the Infinite Round from the arc of the now,
From the petty scheme of things here constructing the whole;
Learning the Universe's sacred How,
And the far-lifted, dramaturgic goal,
From the high promptings of the human soul!
Oh, not misled by fancy's wander-lure,
As in some old wife's winter-tale of dole,
But following thee, a Light of Being sure,
The soul erects itself a home that shalt endure!

I only know that I am I, that right
Is right, that vaster plans than men's are boune
For a world-ripening, that like eyebright,
The healing of a great hope shall not soon
Leave the earth darkling like a burnt-out moon.
With ever-widening vision thou shalt teach
An Unseen World, by the strange reason-rune
Of Upward-spiring life that gains new reach
Suddenly. Lo, mortal tongue puts on immortal speech!

What if, then God be not unknowable!
  What if His essence, dimly visioned, be
The great World-Purpose—How thou can'st
    not tell—
  That sets Him a far end illimitably
  Obscure, in a vast world-society
Of singing souls He did create! O, still
  He finds Him here a goodly pleasaunce-fee!
In myriad ways His dream He doth fulfill,
In myriad ways doth magnify His lordly will!

The solere chamber of the goodman Joy
  Is bright with jasmin sprays. The placket
    jade,
Lascivious sense, thou hast cast forth a toy
  Of loathing. Now are no demurrers laid,
  For now the frolic soul of man, arrayed
As for a bridal feasting, goeth forth
  To meet the bride, who hath obeisance made
In wifely wise. Brute fact owns spirit's worth,
And to her lord, the ever-living Will, deferreth!

Lo, on Time's utmost littoral unfurled,
Where my poor thought gropes after thee with teen,
I spy the spirit-guidons of the world!
The buffetings of lonely seas unseen
Waver them not. Howso the deeps careen,
Right onward drives she toward her bourn of light,
The austere Ship of Souls. Wide, wide between
Unmoor the senses their engulphing night;
On she drives unattaining, still gallant to the sight!

WILD GEESE IN APRIL

Honk ye, honk ye, as ye go
North to green Ontario,
Voyagers of afternoon,
Buoyant-wingèd sky-platoon.

In what odorous gulfland, say,
In what caravanserai
Of dim leafage, loitering
Where the endless bayous ring,
Have ye tarried for the spring?
Up what ever-shining shoals,
Where the Cumberland unrolls,
Or across what sedgy lake,
Trailing darkness in your wake,
Have ye seen the dawn-lights shake?
Over what far prairie's marge,
Where horizons still enlarge,
And great winds go shouting by,
Have ye fared with unshut eye?
Following April's blossomy feet,
Ah! ye find the following sweet!

Honk ye, honk ye, as ye go
North to green Ontario,
Voyagers of afternoon,
Buoyant-wingèd sky-platoon.

THE MERFOLK CHORUS

THE MERMEN SING

In the dolorous ways
  Of twilighted coasts,
In the chasms of eld,
  Unfrequented gulphs,
Where bleak are the scarps
  And alien the foam
And ghostly the fronds—
  Dawns the light of the day.

In the wastes of the sea
  Where the brachs of wild things
Swift startle in fright,
  Where the gullets of sharks
Are wide in pursuit,
  And the becks of the fearsome
Umheeded are vain—
  Dawns the life-giving light.

The dawn is ashift
  On the bottoms of ooze
Where the livid sea-snake
  Is writhen in terror
And the attor of serpents
  By darkness is curdled,
Where the paunches of whales
  Are putrid in death.

In the caverns of sea
  Where the dim death-pools
Are shot through with eyes,
  Where the corpse-candles pale
Are lit by dead hands—
  On the derelict's spar
And the deep-sunken keel
  Is the Light of the day.

THE MERWOMEN SING

The perils are gone
  Of the blear midnight;
The waters are cool
  In the bulrush beds,
And limpid the friths
  Where we wont to play—
Lovely is daylight
  In the wells of the sea.

Dawn's faint in the sky
  And the day is at hand;
Wind-blossoms are white
  In the green waters snared,
Irised flags are asway
  Like ghosts in the stream—
And evermore down
  Lights sift in the sea.

Dawn's pale on the wave,
  On the straits of the sea,
Where the rapid scud sings
  And pounces in vain,
Where the frail froth-bells
  Have swung through the night—
On old markings of foam
  Is the light of the day.

The day is at hand
  In the cisterns of sea,
Where the bubbles wink up
  From the depths in bright train,
Where the ribbed, mottled whelks
  Strew the sand of the floors,
And strange mid-sea things
  Moon out from their lairs;
While lights more and more
  Waver deep in the sea!

SEA GULLS

Sea gulls are we
That poisèd be
In the pendulous vast of sky;
On spreaded pinions,
Through Air's dominions,
We throng where the flockt clouds lie.

We float and hover,
The green deep over,
Through the livelong afternoon;
Or with curved shadow,
The sea's broad meadow,
We climb 'neath the pallid moon.

Through the blue weather,
We voyage together
Where the ship's pronged furrow turns;
Or slow wing weighed,
All penning stayed,
We watch where the low sun burns.

In the running wave,
We dabble and lave
While the white comb crumbles fast;
This time to leeward,
Next time to seaward,
We follow the slapping mast.

Through the lucent air
We jocundly fare,
With the salt spume flying below;
Up the wide acre
Of the slant breaker
We wheel, and scattering go.

O gulls are we
That poisèd be
In the pendulous vast of sky;
On spreaded pinions,
Through Air's dominions,
We throng where the flockt clouds lie.

THE PRAIRIE DAWN

GENTLY, Night, and get ye gone,
Gently, Light, and speed ye on;
Still in no indecorous haste,
Seemly still and tranquil-paced,
Speed the softly-burgeoning dawn!

Over the sibilant pampas' brim,
Over the trails that dwindle and dim
Away to the far horizon-rim,
Speed the dawn!
Over the skull and the shank of bone
That, beat by the rains, by the winds blown,
Dim in the day-break whiten lone;
Over the dolorous pioneer-brood
That in yon shambling canvas-hood
Crawls patiently westward rood by rood,
Speed the dawn!

Gently, Night, and get ye gone,
Gently, Light, and speed ye on;
Still in no indecorous haste,
Seemly still and tranquil-paced,
Speed the softly-burgeoning dawn!

AT THE BATTERY

I WANDERED aimless by the Battery,
Noting the uncouth forms that lolled about;
Aliens from many lands, come oversea,
They fronted sunwise, stolid hearts yet stout:
Sudden a breathless hush along the quay,—
Then, suddenly unpent, a rapturous shout!

I know not what had led me to the place;
Perhaps as one will let his footsteps wend,
Unguided, anywhither, so all trace
Of the week's strife may vanish at its end,
So 'mid the city's ugliness some grace
To daily living Beauty's self may lend!

I know not why that morn these outland boors,
Having come a wintry, steerage-herded way,
Yet dallied there—haply where heart endures
Most, it most clings; or haply for the day
Smiled sunnily!—Ah, still, it still allures,
That ripple of light laughter up the bay!

My heart leapt, for the freshness of the morn
Lay on it like a garment; the clear air
Was like a heart's-joy waiting to be born:
Idly I wondered did yon peasants there—
Odd how their unkempt hair dropt o'er their worn
Blouses!—for the proud morning's beauty care?

Idly I watched the bright, incoming sea
Under the volumed smoke; idly the white,
Faint stirrings of a cloud: then gloriously
Plunged in the splendour of the morning light,
A score of shining streams cascading free,
A staunch, flame-battling shore-craft hove in sight!

Along the harbor-front, it stays the fires,
Wedding to use its beauty!—the columns rose,
Dazzling and white again, in gleaming gyres!—
In fancy still I see it where it goes,—
As the high soul to aid men still aspires,—
Gallant to save the city from its foes!

THE DULL WAYS SING

To-morrow is Thanksgiving Day.
  I hear the clatter and rush
Of the boys' feet as class gives way
  To class; then, as the brush
Of unseen summer airs, the sway
  Of morning's light and hush!

Just now I thought next day would bring
  But one brief respite more
From the stark round of harassing
  Aches teaching has in store.
Lo, suddenly the dull ways sing,
  The limping minutes soar!

A handful on the benches there
  Slow, heedless—what you will
Illiterate, alien—unaware
  Of a great craftsman's skill;
Yet blown on by a mountain air,
  Stirred by an upland thrill.

What if this one says "t'rough" for "through"?
  Or that one oft declines
To use a final "g," or "shrew"
  As "loving wife" defines?—
In their young brimming eyes, oh, true
  The master's meaning shines!

The school-room with its calcined walls,
  The benches ranged in rows,
The maps, blackboards, the lockered halls,
  Forgot, Youth's fancy goes
Forth where the summer forest calls,
  The light of day's-end glows.

Each is an old Dutch villager
  In a wild twilight glen
Who sleeps, to drown the thought of her,
  A sleep of years twice ten,
Taking a draught of strange liqueur
  With Hudson's little men.

THE PUFFER'S SKIN

Suggested by a stroll through the New York Aquarium.

A LAMPAD, from an Hawaiian puffer's skin!—
  Yonder the live fish swims, the legend says,—
A beautiful strange goal for life to win:
  To be a light to island savages!

Is such our boasted immortality,
  Such the fantastic substance of the dream
That man has dreamed of life that is to be:
  A shell of sense through which strange soul-
    lights gleam?

A VACATION THOUGHT

Your presence, love, each circumstance, the
hour,
Wrought with a subtle power
To weave a gracious something that remains,
Sole among lesser gains,
A form of pure, imperishable sway
Over Life's little day.
Vacation come, and on the heels of the blear
Marchtime, the spring o' the year,
Blithe, and the balmy morn. The lessening
slips,
And the great, red-funneled ships
At pier, the crowding craft, and ruffling white,
The river in the misty light!
Did not our hearts sing, bonny love, as we
Looked backward still to see
Towering up in the clear April air,
Above their fellows there,
Gigantic symbols of a viewless whole,
The incarnated soul
Of a world-traffic? Involuntarily,
As though our minds should be
Winging an equal flight, the city lay
To our thought's plastic sway,
A living thing, oh, curiously vast;
Of an intricate cast
In all its members, church and mart and hall,

Each institutional
Organ with other organ close ingrown,
As a great flower just blown!
And, as involuntarily there came
Into our thought the same
High and grave fancy of a breathing whole,
Infused as with a soul,
Lo, there above the waifs and wrecks of men
Who foul as with a den
The city's unseen, bestial parts, there rose,
Where the great life-tide flows
Richest, a vision of proud men and strong
Who boldly smite the wrong,
Who serve the city, as they love her, most,
And are her noblest boast!

What numbèd lingerer is this that chills
The shrunken earth, and stills
That late, upspringing chorus of sweet sounds?
Yet with us, heart, abounds
The memory of that morn when up the land,
And up the dim sea-strand,
Came the fair, jocund piping of the spring.
As an arousèd thing,
Rubbing its eyes of morn, the couchant earth,
Across each icy firth
Of the sea, across the stream whose circling arms
The vast mid-ocean warms,

Peered from the eastward; and from the westward peered,
Across prairies seared,
Across wide valleys where old streams have lent
Wealth to a continent,
Across the south-land, where, in its bayourings,
The long year basks and sings.
And as that memory of a high joy returns,
And as the clear sun burns
Again for us on Trinity's low spire,
Turning its gloom to fire,
There comes a thought of the imperial state
That makes the city great—
The state whose blood-tides from each youthful part
Surge here as to a heart,
Whose nerves from each remotest bound would fain
Knit here into a brain.
These derelicts, O my love, on the city's sea,
What other may they be
Than the strewn flotsam of a nation's hope,
Souls that despairing grope?
And these high hearts that are the city's self,
Scornful of private pelf,
Making their city's and their country's fame
Their one clear, righteous aim,
Standing an unshook bulwark in our need,
Against corporate greed—

Forgetting not who led the nation's host
  And still availeth most
Against the wrong—though of the city's press
  Are they the city's less
That forth from every corner of the land
  They come, a princely band?

Remote in this fair vale of Cumberland
  Where still on either hand
The low hills lift up to the buxom fields
  Their bluely distant shields,
Where the huge barns by the red homesteads lift
  Sleek monuments of thrift,
Once more we greet the springtide. The warm rains,
  Soft on the window-panes,
The drowsy-cackling fowl, the twitterings
  Of a myriad happy things,
Prelude swift growths. Vacation-end is near;
  The days of respite wear
Away, and once again, though all unsought,
  Comes to our idling thought,
That morning. Past the swarming wharves, above
  The river that we love,
Beyond the waste of roof-trees, our eyes seek
  One far, low-angled peak.
Then for thee only, heart, as our eyes turn
  Inly, the swift words burn.

Lo, this the auditory, as it lay
  On that last, farewell day!
A thousand murmurous youth upon the floor
  And a half thousand more
In the bowed gallery. Soon a hush and thrill,
  As the great organ's will
Lifted the voices upward, wave on wave.
  Then fell on me a grave,
Heart-searching thought of all the power he holds,
  Whoso these young lives moulds,
Cunning to fashion them that there shall be,
  In the futurity,
Such citizens as, not ignobly base,
  Barterers for wealth and place,
Still level to the laws are taught to rise
  Patriotic; and oh, wise
To conceive how incomparably great
  The mission of the state!

OLD MILLERSVILLE

Sweet cloistral ways amid Lancastrine fields,
  To me your memory yields,
Through the withdrawing years of a decade,
  Dream-shapes that cannot fade.
Warm with the imperishable glow
  Of Youth's clear promise-bow,
Land of wide tilth, I see your quaint forms lift,
  Bounteous to German thrift,
Above the years: old crooked autumn-lanes,
  Rutted by loaden wains,
Fragrantly creaking to the white-washed shed;
  Glossy-leaved fields that spread,
Level, green row on row, their tobacco-plants,
  Where Summer, daylong, pants
Afield; and through each straggling locust row,
  Undulant tremors go.
On nights moonlit, at Conestoga trists,
  Lover to lover lists.
The far hill-district, wooded, shines or glooms
  With rhododendron blooms,
While, seethed amid its rocks and old pot-holes,
  The Susquehanna rolls.
Still, still in memory stray my loitering feet
  Down the quaint village street!
The willows by the standing-pipe still weep,
  Yet their fine beauty keep;
Above me there, red-bricked and ivy-clad,
  School tower and walls laugh glad.

Oh, once again I feel my youth renew
The Spirit's Derring-do!

No less within thy beauteous, youth-crowned ways
My loitering memory strays:
Along the halls again the adventurous troll
Of some swift night-cry droll,
Some railway-station call, or chanticleer
By farm-lad mocked, I hear
Startling the studious silence-hour; or soon,
Studies put by, the boon
Of happy laughter, scurrying feet, and then
The clock's slow stroke of ten;
Silence! then waters from dark casements flow
On luckless heads below.
Again I hear the table's burst of cheer,
Lamplit, the day's end near;
Studies forgot, youth's brisk garrulities
Outpour in uncheckt ease;
After, upfloats faint from the board-walk throng
Laughter and snatch of song.
On Sunday nights, with youth's meek reverence,
Once more I lull each sense,
That in great silence may preluded be
The week's activity.
Oh, as I write, again old faces stir
From out the class-room blur;

Young eyes, ashine like stars, as from the verge
  Of things they looked, emerge;
In the room's quiet, haply kindled so
  By Truth's undying glow.
Still at each holiday's approach I share
  The quick expectant air
Pervading all, farewells of sundering eves
  When the heart joys yet grieves.
Then, oh, that last farewell, when, "exams" done,
  And proud diploma won,
Acclaim of kin and friend in happy ears,
  With youth across the years
Again I look, by the Vision bright ahead
  Still not unvisited!

So dream-shapes rise: without of burghered ease,
  Nature's tranquillities;
Within of callow growths, the canticles
  With which youth's glad hour swells;
My heart, rhythmic with joy, grateful to both,
  To leave their bright forms, loath.
But from the shut memory-close, upsprings
  Thoughts of more august things:
High words spoke by whose souls within them burned,
  Low-thoughted self-ways spurned,
Hours when comrades adown old wooded lanes
  Loitered; or growing pains

Of thoughts big with the stupendous whole
Of things, the freighted soul
Unburdening to its fellow, the while brisk walk
Made savory the talk.
Or we who taught made week-end's holiday,
Mingling with our grave play
And sober blandness of the luncheon-hour,
Spent in some quiet bower
Of wood or vale, comment on plant or bird,
By trained sense seen or heard,
Patient inquiry into nature's way
Till we saw open lay
Many a secret, glimpsing far-off and high,
Her dim Entirety.

In the red lamplight and a room's scant space,
Still, still I see one face;
And read mayhap of a proud Scholar-life.
Hopeful of the year's strife
To come, we dedicate to the Great Ideal
All that we are and feel,
While through the open window, where boughs sway
In a moonlight like day,
Slowly the moving tides of the night air
Make us, oh, well aware,
Of a spirit something deeply interbound
With the universe's round!
Comrades in the pursuit of Beauty, warm
In her every living form,

With the old dreams, we vow us to-day to that
call,
Ultimate beyond all,
To track the Splendours of life, through
whatso dim course,
To their one radiant source.
And oh, forgetting not the old ways and
friends,
And the high leisurely ends,
Joyously still we join man in his upward climb
From a low splay-foot time,
Each lower, more bestial plane giving way to
one
Higher he now climbs on,
Till, as a poor serf raised to feast at his master's right hand,
At last on the highest we stand!

TO ALLEGHENY O!

Proud is her home in the mid-East,
  Her seat by the inland sea;
And proud are the states that stand at her
    gates,
  A worshipful trinity!

Got openly or by stealth, lads,
True learning's more than wealth, lads;
Here's a health, lads,
  To Allegheny O!

Dear is the dawn of Dreaming,
  The visions of the years;
And dear are the ghosts of the vanished hosts
  She has sped upon high careers.

Be heartened, then, and stout, lads,
And shame old Folly out, lads;
Lift a shout, lads,
  To Allegheny O!

Sweet is the comradery old,
  The Brotherhoods in joy;
And sweet is the dower of the indolent hour
  She bestows on the heart of a boy.

Be then our stoutest boast, lads,
'Tis fellowship we prize most, lads;
Give a toast, lads,
  To Allegheny O!

TO COMMERCE HIGH

A SONG

To the tune of the Russian national hymn.

Buoyant with eager youth, fair Commerce,
stand.
Send a proud voice across a shadowy land;
Bid those who sit in night lift up their eyes—
Lo, yonder on the peaks a great Sunrise!

Voice of a time that shall no longer mar
Beautiful great Earth-Hopes with frantic war,
Hymn thou a Light of Love, noon's full in-
crease,
When men unvexed shall walk pathways of
peace.

Hymn thou a time to come, dream of the just,
When wealth shall be to men hallowed in trust;
When strength shall suddenly—cry but the
need—
Smite the old Worm that guards hoardings of
greed.

Oh, hymn the happy time when, day by day,
Work shall grow luminant, made one with play;
When, with a grace of eld, caught overseas,
Men shall know art, and joy, and golden ease!

He loved the hue of words, the subtleness
  Of deftly-knitted speech, melodious sounds;
His mind was hive of lovely images;
  His sympathy almost beyond bounds
Of human loving ran out like a flood,
And very privy things he understood.

Yet he was not a poet.—Then he found
  A mind more nobly pregnant than his own,
A tranquil poet pacing slow the ground
  Where the green Cumbrian hills with lakes are sown:
His will to a great steadfastness was wrought,
His soul was quickened to a weightier thought

Than any he had known. He saw the whole
  Of things, from arctic storm to tropic calm;
He saw the cycle of all life unroll
  From man down to the lowliest forms. A psalm
Of gratefulness—each was a living part
Of the all-loving Life—broke from his heart!

LOWELL'S GRAVE, MT. AUBURN

Above, a lone elm stands, a sentinel;
Below, there lies a poet's dreaming dust:
Challenge the boughs cry to each lightest gust,
Then to the roots that fold him give, "All's well!"

I READ WITH TEARS A TALE OF ANCIENT IND

I READ with tears a tale of ancient Ind—
Not of that swarm with which our age is rife,—
A spirit-height swept by a spirit-wind,
Great Buddh, the heroic story of thy life!

I read, great Buddh, the story of thy life,
How from Earth's joys at last thou found'st release,
And prayed I, too, might win, through strife on strife,
To that great calm of being which is Peace!

GEORGE GISSING

If heaven be not full of common folk
  That jostle as in London to and fro;
If God's word be not plain and simply spoke,
  George Gissing, say, wherever will you go?

RIP VAN WINKLE

As played by the late Joseph Jefferson.

He has not gone! Art mocks our fears:
He sleeps another score of years.
On every hand incredulous looks:
Rip has not yet "gone off the hooks."

It may be in some mountain-glen
With Hendrick Hudson's little men,
He smacks his still delighted chaps
Over huge flagons of good "schnapps";
Greets the "old fader" and each "brudder"
With, "Come, we drink mit one anudder";
And toasts them, one by one, again
Still with, "Here's your good healt', my frien' "
And, knowing never end to bliss won,
Continues still "not to count this one."

It cannot be! He will awake
And feel in every joint an ache;
Look where his flintlock piecemeal lies
With the old vagabond surprise;
And, peering round him wide and wider,
Call an imaginary Schneider;
In the old streets be hooted back
By a new graceless urchin-pack;
Or by his tavern-cronies be
Denied even an identity;

Till sharp he cry, with anguish shook—
By one dear heart, oh, not forsook!
"Do you not know me? Meenie, look!"

He has not gone! Art mocks our fears:
He sleeps another score of years.
On every hand incredulous looks:
Rip has not yet "gone off the hooks."

BABY MINE

Baby mine, when years have had some
  Way with you—There in your basket
  You smile so, I needs must ask it.—
Will you be in heart so gladsome?

When the ills of life beleaguer
  You, as they do me—Unfretting,
  There beneath your insect-netting—
Will you smile be then so eager?

When, years hence, you do in fact live
  In the thick of things—Unfailing,
  How those arms and legs go flailing!—
Will you then, pray, be so active?

Youngster, when the world shall know test
  Grievous, lacking tongue—That crowing
  Is the spirit's overflowing.—
Will you raise a voice of protest?

When it loves, and strives to show it,
  Will you stammer or—That cooing,
  Ah, one's inmost heart is wooing!—
Golden-mouthèd, be a poet?

THE CHRISTMAS DRUM

TO MASTER W—— S——

IN the thrum-thrum-thrum of this Christmas drum
Are thoughts, my lad, stirring
That pale the joys of the other toys,
Subtler ones conferring?

In your small brain is the dim refrain
Of feet still beating,
As sounds the call of the school-room thrall,
Its rub-a-dub repeating?

Does a rhythmic tread lurk in your head
Of beasts that sniff and paw dust
As the big band goes, with the three-ringed shows,
Upstreet, to the smell of sawdust?

Or has the roar of the battle's fore
Through lives on lives so dwindled
That in the thrum of this Christmas drum
An ancient fire is kindled?

BERRIES AND BABIES

As I was picking berries
  This morning in the garden—
    Some I'd been told to fetch for supper,—
    The ones, I noticed, that grow upper,
In size like weazened cherries,—
  I saw they, in the sun, dry up and harden.

In stepping a bit deeper,
  Where are more tangled bushes—
    Lured on to look low down in under,—
    Dim in the shade I saw this wonder:
Each under leaf a sleeper,
  Raspberries, huge, and red as maiden's
        blushes!

In strolling through the city,
  Amid the Eastside's bareness—
    Purpose I'd none save that of gazing—
    The streets I noted all were blazing.
Deep in me stirred a pity—
  Poor, pallid babies, they'd not a green
        thing's fairness!

Returning to my suburbs,
Where there's a world of shadows,
And open—why, we've here an acre!—
I watch, amid the field's green breaker,
Culling what one may dub herbs,
Rosy-cheeked youngsters go, shouting out glad "oh's"!

THE THREE BEARS

This morning, amid the soft summer airs,
  I read my little daughter that old tale
Of Goldenlocks astray and the three bears,
Of the hot porridge and the three-sized chairs,
  And the one bed that would for sleep avail;
  And marveled how it should her mind regale.

Then there came back how, in the years long fled,
  A youngster standing by my mother's knee,
I had first heard the pleasant folk-tale read.
My mind, with joy inexplicably fed,
  Approved, I now know, with due meed of glee,
  What men had felt in the race-infancy.

THE BULL PUP

TAIL half gone and ear chewed up,
Stubborn warrior, thou bull pup;
Full respect I pay to thee,
Thine is Life's philosophy;
Never yield and never run,
Hang on till the fight is won.

Bandy legs so queerly set,
Never budged in battle yet;
Grimy coat that once was white,
Badged with mud of many a fight;
Grim eyes whence fear cannot chase
Courage, sign of all thy race;
Hide along the ribs laid bare,
Naught for dangers heroes care;
Ugly wound upon the thigh,
Witness how thy foes do die!

Full respect I pay to thee,
Thine is Life's philosophy;
Never yield and never run,
Hang on till the fight is won.
Tail half gone and ear chewed up,
Stubborn warrior, thou bull pup.

THE NORTHERN SPY

WHAT the secret, Northern Spy,
Of thy charm is, know not I;
This I know, thy witchery
Lies on me, will ever lie.

Cheeks as ruddy as the brands
Night uplifts from Day's spent hands;
Bended as the bow, and true
As any woodsman ever drew;
Juices that as grateful be
As the airs the unquiet Sea
Stirs the noon with; flesh as fair
As the wan gold of the hair
Combeth the Mermaiden there.
Ah, Languors of that Ancient Wine,
Whose soul slid singing into thine,
Come sing within this soul of mine.

Sing the song of old Omar:
Present joys be all that are—
Present joys whose only test
Beauty is, and wholesome zest.
Sing the secret, Northern Spy,
Of thy charm; I would know, I:
For I know thy witchery
Lies on me, will ever lie.

LACKAWAXEN

WHAT French père or canting Saxon,
Or chance redskin, first made tracks on
Thy bold headlands, Lackawaxen?

In a thousand leagues of transit,
East to the blue Narragansett,
I have seen no waters dance it
As thine do,—now light as flaxen
Maiden's-hair, now skirled in racks on
Thy wide spaces, Lackawaxen.

Not the heights that swarm like midges
Where the clouds in airy bridges
Loop the Allegheny's ridges;
Not the slopes where rebel Jackson
Breathed his last, heave such blue backs in
Air as thou dost, Lackawaxen.

Not the firs of Carolina
Whose red sunset-tops like wine, a
Little space burn, a Shekinah;
Not Maine lakes, make such attacks on
Coming ills as the swift vaccine
Of thy clear air, Lackawaxen.

Often I sit here and wonder,
These days, while the iterant thunder
Of the streets goes dully under,
Whether redskin, canting Saxon,
Or French shaveling, first made tracks on
Thy bold headlands, Lackawaxen.

THE JUNE DAYS GO

The days are not many,
  The days are few,
    When wild locusts blow;
When the wind warms, if any,
  The south wind warms you,
    And the June days go.

The squirrel leaps lightly,
  The squirrel leaps lithe,
    Where long grasses grow;
And perks an eye brightly,
  And perks an eye blithe,
    And the June days go.

The throstle's a-flutter,
  The throstle's a-thrill
    In the green shades O;
And the notes it would utter,
  The hasty notes spill,
    And the June days go.

Oh, the days are not many,
  The days are few,
    When the cool runs flow;
When the wind warms, if any,
  The south wind warms you,
    And the June days go.

FIFTY ROBINS

FIFTY robins yelpin'
So our milkman said;
Fifty robins helpin'
Rout him out o' bed.

Fifty robins yelpin'
For the peep o' light;
Fifty robins helpin'
Sing away the night.

Fifty robins yelpin'
For the green to grow;
Fifty robins helpin'
Shout away the snow.

Fifty robins yelpin'
In a blessed lay;
Fifty robins helpin'
Hymn in Easter day.

Fifty robins yelpin'
'Thout a thought of why;
Fifty robins helpin'
Us laugh instead of cry.

WHEN MARY OVER THE MOUNTAIN GOES

A tradition is current in the Shenandoah Valley to the effect that on a certain day in spring the Virgin Mary "goes over the mountain," and that on the nature of the day when she does so, depends the character of the weather for the six weeks following.

When Mary over the mountain goes,
   Be not foul the day,
For if a frowning face she shows,
   Six long weeks are gray.

When Mary over the mountains goes,
   Oh, be fair the weather,
For if she smile, then gladness grows
   Six long weeks together!

AS A LONE DIVER

As a lone diver who endures all day,
In the sea's bowels, the uncanny stare
Of fish, hails at even the bright world again,
So I, having in studies lost my May
Of years, yield me at last unto Life's fair
Enticement with a passion that is pain.

TO ONE ENGAGED

STRANGE, dear, that we should given be
Each to the other utterly!
May now the slightest wish of one
The other straightway act upon;
Let each to other now confess
The heart's extremest tenderness;
Now be each selfish old intent
New-writ in Love's dear testament.
So may our wed life be more fair
Than are cloud-pictures hung in air,
Our days together be more bright
Than skyey urns of happy light!

ONLY TO VIEW THE SEA

ONLY to view the sea sun-showered in far
  Innumerable avenues of foam,
  Misty, blue-seething, or by night the gloom
Of the waste waters and their tumbling war;
Only to see the wave-enamoured star
  All magically glint, to hear the boom
  Of wave behemoth swell like a soul's doom
On the ship's side, then flee with echoing roar.

Enough were these to satisfy for all
  The soul's high sense of ideal loveliness,
  But these were not to really know the sea.
Alone thou must for days brood on her fall
  And rise, her ever-changing changelessness:
  Thus may'st thou glimpse her mighty mys-
      tery.

KÖLN DOM

NOT more enrapt the traveller town-spent
Who views the majesty of Blanc at morn,
Nor Lief more thrilled when, by wide seas outworn,
He stared upon an untrod continent
Than I to look on thee, thou wonderment
Of wonderments; surely no woman-born
Hath builded thee, but God himself in scorn
Of human skill, as his own monument.

In thy hushed spaces I do feel the dread,
The awefulness of worship steal upon
My wondering sense, till down on the chill stone
I kneel beside the hind who toils for bread,
While far-reverberating throats intone
Through thy vast vaults the requiems of the dead.

ON A HEIGHT NEAR JENA

Oh, to have seen great Goethe in those days
  When treading yonder winding ways of stone,
  Or at yon window long a-look there shone
On his young eyes vistas of opening ways!
Or Schiller, with slow, meditative gaze,
  Pacing yon quiet hedgerow path alone,
  Pregnant with greatness, big with dreams half-grown
Of high emprise, crowned with immortal bays!

Yet mayhap such view only would have been
To know the gross imperfect thing that men
  Called Goethe, Schiller, not the imperial soul;
That I feel kin with now as, towered unseen,
  I see as once saw they this far-stretched scroll
  Of mead and town and castled height unroll.

THE KAISER HOF

SHALL any deem these Kaisers in their state,
Friedrichs and Wilhelms, frowning from these walls,
Stout as their battles were, proud as their halls,
Shall any deem them more than passing great?
And who shall say this greater one whom Fate
Decreed a Kaiser, though uncrowned, whose calls
Knit thrones, whose fame shall wane only when falls
The Empire—Bismarck, even him who dares call great?
Come question we all that has been of man
Since dim Antiquity what the great plan,
What place, these world-high names upon the roll?
As dies the coral mite to build its shoal,
So they, merest fractions all of that bright span
Whereby the race sweeps upward to its goal.

TWO PAINTINGS

In the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Two paintings hang here where the crowds
go by:
That larger one above, Napoleon
At St. Helena, though 'tis so ill done,
Compels imperiously the general eye;
This smaller one, a rain that tranquilly
Falls on green meadows like a benison,
As wholesome and as gravely true as one
Of Wordsworth's poems—who sees it? Only I.
When will the world put by these childish toys,
These tinsel gods of empery and war,
These violent melodramas writ for boys?
When will it, wiser grown, care only for
The very truth of Nature, for the joys
Of seeing common things exactly as they are?

SERENEST SIDNEY

SERENEST Sidney, as the tides ebb and flow,
  Swayed by the beauty of the moon's embrace,
  So sway I in sweet fancy to thy grace
Amid proud dames at some old courtly show.
Too fond the dream! Little, alas, the low
  Traffickers of these trade-bedraggled days
  Reck thy clear loveliness; little, this race
That barters ev'n in Beauty's porches. Yet
    know!
There lives to-day one of nobility,
  From out the confines of the knightly past
    Seemingly strayed into our sordider time.
Thinking on him, Sidney, I think on thee
  Till both unto a flawless one are cast—
    Fair model of a golden Manhood's prime.

IN MEMORIAM

Occasioned by the death of Miss Frances Willard, whose next to the last public address was made in Kent Theatre, at the University of Chicago.

Oh, art thou dead, thou prophet of sunrise,
Whose face turned ever from the baleful night,
Turned ever toward the rosy-kindling height,
Whence Hope tossed back the dawn into thine eyes?
Art dead, thou soul of masculine emprise,
Whose fragile woman-form thy spirit's might,
Thy masterful soul-headlong sense of right,
Bowed underneath thy world-activities?

I see thee yet as I did see thee last,
Thou Mary mother of the hidden me,
Thy wistful voice slow-stealing through the calm
Of the hushed auditory, till the past
Re-lives, until one only face I see
And only feel the brow-press of one palm.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

In New York Harbor.

I SAW her stand full in the flaming west,
  Fronting the ashen east, Liberty. The brand,
  So imperially uplifted in her hand,
The great sun kindled as he drew to rest;
Then the soft-sandaled night over the crest
  Of the dim shoreward hills went up the land
  And lo, a shadowy blur upon the strand,
And a strange, shadowy fear within my breast!

What are these sounds that come from oversea,
  Making a mock of France's beauteous gift,
And echoing our proud mouthings scornfully?
  They are the curses that the hunted lift
  Against a loathèd sway, the prayers that drift
Heavenward from lips that would, forsooth, be free!

THE AWAKENING

I SAW a mighty nation, strength upbent,
In epic unhaste striving west and west,
Attain at last her century-long quest,
The subjugation of a continent.
Then I beheld her, for long too intent
On her vast task, by a foul wrong possest,
And what should for the all-weal have been blest,
Employed to her own inward detriment.

My land, thou rousest at last. Everywhere
Signs of the day-spring proud are in the air.
Man's growth in brotherhood, albeit slow,
Is sure. Then let the wrathful trumpets blare!
Behold! marked for stupendous overthrow
The walls of wealth's high-builded Jericho!

A SOLACE

The virginal recesses of this wood
  With a cool chasteness woo my wavering feet:
  Here sends the dank mold incense up to
      greet
The gnarlèd boles that an age-long have stood,
Gray druids, in the beechen solitude;
  Here finds my aching sense a hushed retreat
  Where the green shadows lie monastic-sweet
And the great silences forever brood.
O happy haunt of untrod privacy,
  The bridal beauty of thy emerald light,
Like the slow glimmer of some cavernous sea,
  Sinks its still benediction on my sight:
Dies far away the fret and clamoury
  Of the world; here let me rest thy eremite.

LIFE

I AM in love with Life whose lustrous eyes
  Do press their orbèd wonder into mine:
  As though some sweet saint rapt before a shrine
Should mingle, half earth—and half heaven-wise,
A marvel mid her golden ecstasies,
  With such a rapture— See, how the great eyes shine!—
  I feel my pulses billow unto thine,
O glorious Life that cometh in beauty's guise!

Even as I taste the bliss without alloy
  The light between the eyelids dies away
  And I peer vainly in a blackened tomb
  Where only hags shrunken and eyeless stray,
Where there remaineth not one damasked joy,
  O loathsome Life despoilèd of thy bloom!

WHEN I AM GONE

Deep in a wood I stray in August time
  Where no rude axeman's foot has ever trod,
  Where only immemorial beeches nod
Their bosky brows above the lichens' rime.
Hundreds yon parching highway steep that climb
  Know not this dewy covert whose sweet sod
  Wafts the faint myrrh of violets up to God—
What boots it them, the forest-beauty's prime!
Thus, thus I wonder if, when I am gone,
  That one who knows better than passing well
  The hidden self within the outward me,
Where happy quiet like a woodland fawn
  Feels adoration cast her lonely spell—
  If he will breathe the fond discovery!

ALTERNATION

Having through the long night slept wholesomely,
I labored daylong in my own green field.
Each effort that did healthful value yield
Was inexpressible delight to me.
Straight came one thought out of my sweat and moil:
O after rest, what is more sweet than toil?

Then, having with my books and loving talk
The evening passed, upon my couch I lay,
And watched the phantoms of the mind bemock
In pleasantness the real shapes of the day.
Then of all moods this to me seemed the best:
O after toil, what is more sweet than rest?

Night follows day and after day the night;
Summer succeeds the winter through the years;
Held in its orbit is each planet bright
By adverse motion; laughter sweetens tears.
Ah, somehow, then, is our life's true equation
A mystically rhythmic alternation?

THE HOUR OF CRISIS

He waited long. The hour of crisis came.
  To gain his end, he paltered with the right.
  The people hailed him victor in the fight;
Within, unseen, he wore a heart of shame.

Years passed. There came another crisis-hour.
  Grown wiser, from the truth he swerved no jot.
  The rabble crowned another without thought;
Alone, unhonored, he joyed with heart of power.

THE STATESMAN

He had great strength, the splendid strength
of youth;
He felt ambition course his veins like flame.
He met the sturdiest foemen; without ruth
He laid them low. Strive as he would, his
name
Failed that he coveted, a deathless fame!

Years after, where the town's worst squalor
spread,
An army of the unemployed he saw;
Sudden his heart with a great pity bled.
He battled long; then felt down on him
draw
The love of millions—he had made Justice
law!

THE VOW

HE was a peasant lad, from Russia come.
He knew the pinch of extreme poverty.
From the vast ignorance that held him dumb
He vowed a great vow that he would be free.
America for him meant opportunity!

His first steps were the hardest. A strange speech
He learned laboriously by the aid
Of one who did far more for him than teach;
Who, to do less than give herself afraid,
Knew her task nobly great: a man—no less—she made.

Then converse with all fructful minds he sought.
His humble parents were amazed indeed
To see their child with men of place and thought
Hold vital speech of system and of creed.
On the full minds of others, his starved mind he would feed.

From everything he learned. The instruments
Of knowing mastered, that magician,
Books, soon unlocked all hoards. With zeal intense,
Step after step he mounted the long span.
He was what he had dreamed, a truly cultured man!

CORN

I WALKED amid the rows of august corn.
  The light of afternoon in the clear sky,
The rain-washed air, cool as of early morn,
  The spreaded, great stalks waving lustily—
  All, all did on me like a benediction lie!

Then my heart lifted up its meed of praise:
  "Nature, my own hand dropt each tiny
    grain;
See this wide growth! I marvel at thy ways.
  I give thee thanks thou dost our lives sus-
    tain;
  And for the joy this beauty gives, thanks
    yet again!"

SINCERITY

I do not ask each day
My daily bread, comfort, nor aught to cheer.
By day, by night, for one sole thing I pray:
Lord, let me be sincere!

I only ask of thee
With my deceit to make no compromise.
I would be rid of it eternally:
Lord, I am sick of lies!

LIVING

I ONLY ask to breathe
This pleasant air, all else forgot the whiles.
For false men, Lord, I cannot longer wreathe
My face in unfelt smiles.

I do not care to think
Of any ultimate thing, nor have to give
Of the mind's sight so much as an eye-blink.
Lord, I would simply live!

THE DAY'S WORK

I do not strive to solve
The riddle of the ultimate mystery:
Neither to what strange end we may evolve,
Nor how we came to be.

I only seek to please
Myself with stanch day-labor duly done;
Night's healing and a little dreamful ease
Content that I have won.

IF I SHOULD DIE TO-NIGHT

I ASKED myself, If I should die to-night,
While through these rainy boughs there goes a wind,
If in my shroud I lay all still and white,
Amid a weeping circle of my kind—
What one thing worth while would I leave behind?

To put the ones I love beyond all care,
Wholly to serve somehow my fellow-men,
To build a rhyme imperishably fair?
Not these: but in men's thought to leave some trace
Of the loving-kindness that is Life's crowning grace.

SOUL'S GAIN

To-night, when the day's work was done,
I sat, in quiet thought, alone,
  And questioned of myself to know,
"Have I to-day made spirit-gain?"
  Came answer confidently so:
"Of two things has my heart to-day been fain:
A baby's laughter and the summer rain!"

THE DAY'S LOSS

At dayfall on my porch, the evening meal
Ended, smoke-clouds making all else unreal,
  I sat and watched the bright procession
Of the day's doings gradually steal
  Across my mind. I asked myself, Which one—
  If I could choose—which would I wish undone?

The rain had ceased; from clouds as from a mask
Broke the day's sunshine. Did a robin bask
  There in the splendor? Were they drops he shook
From his brown coat? Mine, a more useful task,
  I thought sighing, and turned me to my book.
  The bird and glory passed. I did not look!

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

AT last we drew anear the realm of bliss.
Then spake I to the angel, 'bove the din
Of trumpets, "These that may not enter in"—
Myriads there were whom I had seen in this
My earthly day, in the metropolis.—
"What, pray, is their unpardonable sin?"

A space the seraph grave made no reply.
I rambled on, "Why, everybody thought
They were a really admirable lot.
Within the marts daylong they busily
Swarmed. They had whatso pleasures wealth could buy.
Meseemed they were without a moral blot."

Then spake the august one with downcast eyes,
While on his face by light of Charles's Wain,
I thought I could detect a shade of pain,
"In one hardly-considered sin there lies
The total sum of their iniquities:
Than gold they knew no other form of gain!

Their lives were selfish; infinitely tame
They grew. Leisure soon lost its power to please;
In poetry the spirit's melodies
Died out for them; beauty became a name.
They sneered at what all high souls cherish, Fame;
They sought no healing for the world's disease."

THOU WHO ART

In youth I frequented the church
  And thought to find out Thee by prayer;
  In schools I heard grave men declare
What thing each had come at by search.
All that I learned but serve to show:
What Thou art, we can never know.

We know that some power gave us life,
  And day by day doth life sustain;
  We know,—we know that spirit gain
Shall somehow crown our mortal strife.
O Thou who to us doth impart
Strength—we thank Thee that Thou art!

THE LOCUST SHELL

My small daughter, in high glee,
Just came crying up to me,
"Papa, look! what is it here?
Like the ones we had last year."
Ah, I found the picture fair:
Tiny girl, with ribboned hair,
Snowy dress, and slippered feet,
Standing in the sunlight sweet,—
Almost rhythmically boon—
Of the July afternoon.
On the portico, with screen
Of the maple's restless green,
I sat rocking, cool, content,
While the slim maid came and went,
With her frailly flowerlike face
And her speech's faltering grace.
From her dainty hand there fell
Into mine a locust shell.
Gauzy, without weight, it lay
Like the soft breath of the day;
Shaped in every portion full,
From where the eye-sockets dull
Stared from the odd-jointured head
Back to where, still undispred,
'Mid its veined interstices
Slept the folded wing-cases.
Little did the small maid know,
Standing, face uplifted so,

What a tale the locust-shell
To my inner sense could tell.
'Twas to her a moment's toy
Exquisite in itself; a joy,
Too, in that the frail membrane
Gave back faint the past again.

Oft a trifling thing sets free
Thought-flocks from the memory.
Ah, this fragile-wingèd shell,—
As some faint-heard morning bell
Has a subtle power to stir,
In an idle worshipper,
All his past of hallowed ways,
One dear face, and Sabbath days,—
So this shell, to my mind's ear,
Summoned voices, piping clear,
Of the things that swelled and died
With the gone year's summertide.
Plain I heard the winter-dumb
Woods, one vibrant underhum.
From their seventeen-year-long
Sleep, the locusts, waked to song,
In one breath, unending, spent
All the years in them had pent.
From the dark earth disemboweled,
Like old monks, all coped and joweled;
Up each bending stalk of grass,
Slow as a clock's hand they pass,

Creatures of the falling night,
To live brief lives in the light;
And then sing themselves away
In the heart of a Mayday.
Soon, in a slow-waving bough,
Punctured in some curious how—
Was the row, precise and clean,
Shuttled by a swift machine?—
Guardedly their eggs they place
Till what time the larvae trace
In turn, slowly down the bark,
Their way to the terrene dark.
Now, in their low cells they lie
Waiting that mysterious cry,—
When their cycle is complete,—
Bids them rise with unstayed feet,
And stir the slow summer days
With their woven psalm of praise.

Thou great power inscrutable,
That within all life dost dwell,
This vast world, we see it teem
With thy creatures, stream on stream;
They but live a day, and pass
Like these locusts of the grass.
If we are than they more great,
Still on thee, both, both must wait.
We are laid in earth away;
Ah, we hope that some fair day,

After time shall heal earth's ache,
Somehow, somewhere we shall wake.
Meantime we can only trust—
Who holds all is surely just!—
That our feet, which go awry,
Thou wilt guide unerringly.

